



## U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization **Small Business AdVocAte**

### Notes From Scott...



*Scott F. Denniston  
Director, VA OSDBU*

It is with mixed emotions that I begin this column. The festive nature of the holiday season has been tempered by the passing of our dear friend Margaret Milligan from the Veterans Health Administration. Margaret's VA family was well represented at her memorial service on Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, and I had the privilege of meeting her loving family. During the service I was reminded how fragile and precious life is—that none of us should ever take this for granted. Everyone in attendance reflected on the enormous contributions Margaret made in life—she will be missed by all of us who knew and had the opportunity to work with her. May God cradle Margaret in his loving arms and bless her family; we know their grief is tremendous.

I had hoped to report the final Fiscal Year 2006 socioeconomic accomplishments in this issue, but there has been a delay in the numbers being finalized. We are still awaiting word that the data con-

tained in FPDS-NG is final and we can prepare the final reports for the year. Based on the preliminary numbers I have seen, it would appear VA had a very good year; it seems we may have exceeded all of the statutory goals, although it may be very close in the women-owned small business and HUBZone small business categories. As soon as we complete the reports they will be staffed to all of the administrations and assistant secretaries for concurrence so we may begin preparing the Secretary's Fiscal Year 2006 Socioeconomic Achievement Awards. Stay tuned for more information on this.

This year saw landmark legislation pass the Congress that will make sweeping changes in how VA contracts with service-disabled veteran-owned and veteran-owned small businesses. By unanimous consent the Senate passed S. 3421, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care and Information Technology Act of 2006, in the wee hours of December 9<sup>th</sup>, shortly before the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned. According to the White House's Executive Clerk's Office, the bill has not been received yet for the President's signature as of December 18<sup>th</sup> (see article by Victoria Johnson, Page 4), but the President's signature is expected soon.

*(Scott's Notes, continued on Page 3)*

### SBA Requires Annual Size Status Recertification

*By: Victoria Johnson & Mark Taylor, Small Business Specialists*

Did you know that just recently the Federal Register published a final rule? The final rule will amend SBA's regulations and will require annual size standard recertification. The rule will take effect on June 30, 2007, but will be retroactive to all contracts and solicitations in existence. It will also allow FPDS-NG to modify its database and track changes in size standards. This article will focus primarily on the new annual size standard recertification requirement.

What will the final rule change?  
13 CFR Parts 121 and 124 will be changed.

Specifically, SBA's regulations will address the time at which size is determined for the purposes of long-term federal contracts to include contract options, Government-Wide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs), the General Services Administration Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contracts and multi-agency contracts (MACs). Also, the final rule will change the 8(a) Business Development regulation to specify when an 8(a) participant may receive orders under GSA's MAS Program and other multiple award contracts.

It is important to understand how size status has been determined in the past. Historically, size status was determined at the initial offer on the contract and retained over the life of the contract. This approach has not been the best strategy because over *(Size Status Recertification, continued on Page 2)*

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**Remembering Those Who Served**

*(Size Status Recertification, continued from Page 1)*

the life of a contract could typically mean 5 -10 years. Allowing recertification over the life of a contract rather than conducting recertification on an annual basis also does not recognize that now more Federal agencies are increasingly making contract awards for long-term contract vehicles with options periods. The downside to this is that these existing long-term contracts lack a mechanism for the annual size standard checks and balances, so to speak. SBA has debated how to implement the annual recertification measure since 2002.

What would be the impact of the annual recertification on the small business community? Once SBA's regulation is amended the new annual recertification would probably increase opportunities for small businesses to win contract awards solely intended for small business concerns. Additionally, SBA's amended regulation would eliminate the problems with large businesses (who were once small but grow to large companies) from winning small-business contracts. Most importantly, this change may enhance the opportunities for small businesses securing more federal government contracts.

What, if any, is the impact of the annual recertification towards federal agencies? SBA's final amended regulation will ensure that small business size status is annually reported over the life of long-term Federal contracts instead of 5 or 10 years down the road. Only time will tell.

For reference, please review the SBA Reauthorization Bill, S.3778. To view the recertification regulation, go to [www.archives.gov/federal-register/the-federal-register/indexes.html](http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/the-federal-register/indexes.html).

### ***Federal Acquisition Circular (FAC) 2005-13***

*By: Deborah A. Van Dover, Senior Procurement Analyst*

FAC 2005-13, became effective September 28, 2006. There were many changes implemented within this FAC, and a summary of the changes pertinent to the various small business programs are listed below:

- ◆ The micro-purchase threshold (FAR 2.101) has been increased from \$2,500 to \$3,000. The simplified acquisition threshold will not be raised at this time
- ◆ The FPDS reporting threshold (FAR 4.602(c)) will be raised from \$2,500 to \$3,000.
- ◆ Commercial Items test program ceiling (FAR 13.500) will be raised from \$5,000,000 to \$5,500,000.
- ◆ The cost and pricing data threshold (FAR 15.403-4) will be raised from \$550,000 to \$650,000.
- ◆ The prime contractor subcontracting plan (FAR 19.702) floor will be raised from \$500,000 to \$550,000, but for construction (\$1,000,000) is unchanged.
- ◆ The Emerging Small Business Reserve Amount was increased from \$25,000 to \$30,000 (FAR 19.1002)

- ◆ The Competitive 8(a) thresholds have increased from \$3 million to \$3.5 million for non-manufacturing NAICS, and from \$5 million to \$5.5 million for manufacturing NAICS. (FAR 19.805-1)
- ◆ The thresholds for non-competitive (sole source) 8(a) have been increased to the same thresholds as the competitive 8(a). (FAR 19.805-1)
- ◆ The thresholds for application of the small disadvantaged business evaluation factor/subfactor have been increased from \$500,000 to \$550,000 and remains \$1 million for construction (FAR 19.1202-2)
- ◆ The threshold for HUBZone sole source awards has increased from \$3 million to \$3.5 million for non-manufacturing NAICS, and from \$5 million to \$5.5 million for manufacturing NAICS. (FAR 19.13)
- ◆ The threshold for sole source awards to service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (FAR 19.14) has increased from \$5 million to \$5.5 million for manufacturing NAICS, however, unlike the 8(a) and HUBZone programs, the threshold for non-manufacturing NAICS did not increase and remains at \$3 million.



***Set-Aside Alert™***

### ***Set-Aside Alert's Small Business Breakfast Series***

*By: Tamika Gray, Small Business Specialist*

Set-Aside Alert is the leading newsletter for small businesses that want to succeed as federal contractors. The newsletter is the premier federal government contract information service written to include, but not limited to: small, minority and women-owned businesses. Not only is it extremely useful to small businesses, it's also useful to prime contractors, and federal executives alike.

The publication addresses issues such as:

- ◆ Contracting and teaming opportunities - a list of firms seeking teaming partners
- ◆ Informative news stories and interviews - the inside scoop on what the government and Congress are doing and how it will affect the procurement process
- ◆ Changes in government regulations, acquisition reforms, new initiatives & rules
- ◆ Case studies of successful small businesses revealing what it takes to win contracts – and manage them effectively - insider tips, proven strategies used by successful small businesses
- ◆ Columns and advice from legal accounting, proposal writing, and other professional advisors

In addition to its publication, Set-Aside Alert also co-hosts events such as the Small Business Breakfast Series. Through presentations from various government offices and private

*(Small Business Breakfast Series, continued on Page 3)*

*(Scott's Notes, continued from Page 1)*

I also want to welcome Cordell Smith, Small Business Specialist, to our staff. Prior to joining OSDDBU, Cordell most recently served as the Executive Director of the HUBZone Contractors National Council and as a professional staff member with the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship (see page 6).

And as we welcome Cordell to the ranks of VA's small business advocacy, we want to say so long and extend our best wishes to a long time acquisition professional and small business specialist, Marcus Clayton, VISN 15. Marcus personifies small business advocacy. He has distinguished himself and VA in performing his small business specialist responsibilities and for that we will always be very grateful. We wish the best of everything for Marcus and his family as he starts retirement—may he pick up twice as many annuity checks as he did salary checks! Good luck Macus!!

I hope you will enjoy the articles and photographs on the Pageant of Peace and Hanukkah in this issue of the [VA Small Business AdVocAte](#). The holidays will be a difficult time for many members of our armed forces and their families as they serve far from home. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers as we enjoy the freedom they provide and preserve for all of us. Freedom is a priceless gift, paid through their untold sacrifices.

Thank you for your continued support of VA's small business programs throughout the year. From all of us in OSDDBU, we wish you a very joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year, hoping the best of everything for you and your families in 2007!

**Scott**

*(Small Business Breakfast Series, continued from Page 2)*

entities, these series are designed to assist both the small and large business community in understanding the challenges in both the private and federal marketplace. During the series, attendees can learn workarounds to increase business while networking to develop important contacts.

On November 16, 2006, Scott Denniston participated as a guest speaker in Set-Aside Alert's *Small Business Breakfast Series*. Scott addressed over 100 attendees representing both the large and small business community on how to market/do business with VA, VA leading the way in terms of SDVOSB accomplishments, and our agency meeting and/or exceeding its small business goals for Fiscal Year 07.

If your acquisition shop is interested in subscribing to Set-Aside Alert, feel free to call 800-845-8420 or visit their Web site at: [www.setasidealert.com](http://www.setasidealert.com).

## Small Business Procurement Scorecard

By: Mark J. Taylor, Small Business Specialist

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget Office of the Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) and the Small Business Administration (SBA), a Small Business Procurement Scorecard (SBP) has been implemented for Fiscal Year 2007 for all federal agencies.

The SBP allows all federal agencies to show their annual progress in small business procurement throughout the year on the scorecard. Previously, agencies only reported their respective annual small business procurement percentages to SBA. SBA retains responsibility to submit the total SBP to Congress. Criteria set by SBA for the balanced scorecard is modeled after the President's Management Agenda (PMA) scorecard and is color coded as GREEN, YELLOW AND RED. Explanations of the color codes and what agencies must do to meet them are:

### GREEN

- ◆ Meets the small business goal in at least 3 socioeconomic categories and shows improvement in the remaining 2 goals; meets all yellow standards. These 5 categories are small, small disadvantaged business, 8(a), woman-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

### YELLOW

- ◆ Meets the small business goals in at least 2 additional socio economic goals, and improves in at least one of the unmet goals. Credit can be given for meeting 4 goals, regardless of which ones they are;
- ◆ Has implemented a strategy to increase the number of competitively awarded contracts to small businesses;
- ◆ Has demonstrated top-level Agency commitment to small business contracting
- ◆ Has a comprehensive small business program that includes written policies and procedures focused on improving the competitive environment and increasing small business participation in the small business procurement process;
- ◆ Has small business achievement(s) as a rating element for acquisition personnel;
- ◆ Works cooperatively with SBA on Outreach & targeting initiatives;
- ◆ Meets deadlines for all required strategic plans and annual reports due to SBA;
- ◆ Has process to ensure small business data is accurately reported in FPDS NG;
- ◆ Enforces small business subcontracting plans and meets subcontracting goals.

### RED

- ◆ Fails to meet Yellow Standards.

*(Procurement Scorecard, continued on Page 4)*

*(Procurement Scorecard, continued from Page 3)*

The Department’s socioeconomic goals for FY 2007 are as follows:

<b>2007 Small Business Goals</b>	
Small Business (SB)	25%
Small & Disadvantaged Business — includes 8(a)	9%
Women-Owned SB	5%
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned SB	3%
HUBZone	3.05%
*Veteran-Owned SB	7%

*\*Please note, SBA tracks 5 socioeconomic goals. Since VA is the primary government advocate for Veterans, the Secretary has mandated a 7% small business procurement goal for Veteran-Owned Small business.*

The Secretary of the Department of Veteran Affairs has issued a memorandum to Department Key Officials to ask all acquisition personnel to renew our support and commitment to ensure maximum practical opportunities for all small business socioeconomic categories in VA acquisitions, in particular veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small business.

Questions regarding SBP scorecard may be directed to the Small Business Administration at [answerdesk@sba.gov](mailto:answerdesk@sba.gov) or, 1-800-827-5722 or, by contacting your local SBA office at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov), then click the local resources button to locate the closest SBA office to you.



## Making Schedule Buys Work for Small Business

*By: Cordell Smith, Small Business Specialist*

The Small Business Act sets challenging goals for various small business categories to have the “maximum practicable opportunity” to participate in federal contracting. In passing these goals, the Congress expressed its judgment that federal agencies and prime contractors need to make extra effort to reach small firms that face special kinds of need. More recent additions to the small business program, such as the service-disabled veteran program, require that extra effort to catch up to longer-standing programs with established markets.

Every dollar you award through those programs makes a real difference in VA’s ability to meet its goals. One challenge, though, is to combine the simplicity of GSA Federal Supply Schedule purchases with the need to do business with these small firms. Of course, Schedule buys are not subject to the set-aside authorities under Part 19 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation, but you

still can consider the small business status of firms when using the Schedules. See FAR 8.405-5.

How can a buyer identify various small firms on the Schedules? Suppose you need to purchase disinfectants. Go to the GSA Schedules e-Library at [www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov](http://www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov) and click on “Hospitality, Cleaning, & Chemicals.” This results in two links, a “73” for GSA Schedule 73, “Food Service, Hospitality, Cleaning Equipment and Supplies, Chemicals and Services,” and “00JWOD” for the Javits-Wagner-O’Day program, recently re-branded as the *AbilityOne* Program. The JWOD link is a good reminder that this purchase may not be eligible for either a Schedule buy or a small business opportunity. Since *AbilityOne* is a mandatory source, investigate this further to see if *AbilityOne* can provide the item needed, before proceeding to a Schedule search. See FAR 8.704.

To proceed with a GSA Schedule buy, click on the “73,” and a page showing various categories and subcategories under Schedule 73 appears. Look for “Disinfectants” under category 476-13. Click on “476-13” and a list of the various contractors with related Schedule contracts will appear. You can narrow this down further using a box on the right side of the screen, which allows you to display the firms according to socioeconomic status. Scroll down to “Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business,” click on it to highlight it, and click “Go” to identify SDV small firms to fill your requirement.

Suppose you need to purchase something for which the relevant Schedule is not immediately obvious. GSA’s Schedules are also searchable by keyword. At the main Schedules e-Library page, type “Disinfectant” in the search box above the “Category Guide” and click “Search.” This brings up the 476-13 category under Schedule 73 and the link to JWOD, as before.

With these simple searches, you can fill your needs, ensure sufficient competition, and apply these vital dollars toward small business program achievements.

## S.3421 Senate Bill Passes 109<sup>th</sup> Congress Just Before Adjournment

*By: Victoria L. Johnson, Small Business Specialist*

Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), Chairman, Veterans Affairs Committee introduced S.3241, Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act on June 6, 2006. On Saturday, December 9, 2006, S.3241 finally passed the Senate just before the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned at 3:00 A.M. The language contained in S.3241, includes the provisions of the House passed H.R. 3082, Veterans Small Business Memorials Affairs Act 2006, which was referred to the Senate on July 25, 2006.

S. 3421, Section 502, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA’s) Goals for Participation by Small Business Owned and Controlled by Veterans in Procurement Contracts, directs the Secretary of VA to establish a goal for each year for participation in VA contracts and subcontracts by small business owned and controlled by veterans and veterans with service-connected  
*(S.3421 Senate Bill Passes 109th Congress , continued on Page 5)*

*(S.3421 Senate Bill Passes 109th Congress, continued from Page 4)*

disabilities. Also, section 502 directs the Secretary, to maintain a database, Vendor Information Pages (VIP), of small businesses owned and controlled by veteran and veteran owners of such businesses. In addition, it bars any small business that misrepresents itself as a small business owned and controlled by veterans from VA contracts for five years. Section 502 improves VA's goals for participation by Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSBs) and Service Disabled Small businesses (SDVOSBs) in contracts only with the VA.

S. 3241, Section 503, VA's Contracting Priority for VOSBs, directs the Secretary to purchase goods and services pursuant to a contracting preference, by giving priority to VOSBs and SDVOSs, if these businesses also meet the requirements of that contracting preference. Section 503 requires contracting priority preference be given to VOSBs and SDVOSBs for the acquisition of goods and services procured only with the VA.

As the chief advocates for small businesses, OSDBU is delighted to see a long awaited law implemented increasing contracting opportunities for our VOSBs and SDVOSBs concerns. This law adds teeth to Executive Order 13360, Contracting with Service-Disabled Veteran Businesses.

## The Unintentional Slight of SDVOSBs and VOSBs

*By: Wayne Simpson, Deputy Director, OSDBU*

VA's accomplishments in contracting with Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB) are the direct result of the dedication and commitment by VA's acquisition professionals who develop acquisition strategies that embrace and advance veteran entrepreneurial programs. VA continues to make significant improvements in these two important socioeconomic categories thanks to the efforts and hard work of VA acquisition professionals. We are all proud of these accomplishments and know how grateful veteran entrepreneurs are for the increased opportunities.

As America's chief advocate for veterans at the Federal level, VA's use of veteran entrepreneurial programs in its own acquisitions is closely scrutinized by the veteran-owned business community and their many advocates. To merely say this is a sensitive issue for veteran entrepreneurs understates its importance. It certainly makes sense. Shouldn't the very defenders of the free enterprise system be among its chief beneficiaries? This is especially true for VA acquisitions, because contracting with SDVOSBs and VOSBs is a logical extension of VA's mission.

Consider a specific example of this sensitivity. SDVOSBs and VOSBs frequently express their concerns to us that, when sources sought notices are issued or a cascading set-aside is used, SDVOSBs and VOSBs generally appear at the end of the list of small businesses. Some opine that

this is because SDVOSBs and VOSBs are not the highest priority for VA acquisition professionals that SDVOSBs and VOSBs are not thought of foremost in the minds of acquisition professionals and they point to the published notices to support this contention, offering it as evidence of a subconscious culture in VA that is decidedly pro 8(a). The common denominator in this perception is the belief that the ordering of appearance of small businesses in notices is in descending order of importance or preference. We realize this is not the case, but we do realize the powerful effect of perceptions, and given the sensitive nature of this issue, we hope you will too.

We also know it would never be the intent of a VA acquisition professional to discount the significance or importance of veteran entrepreneurs and their programs. VA employees by virtue of their employment and our mission are veterans' advocates.

VA has it within our power to change this perception by being as sensitive to the perception as the veteran business community. One way is to show SDVOSBs and VOSBs first and second, respectively, on sources sought notices and in cascading set-aside solicitation documents, and when discussing small business programs to discuss these programs first. It will send important messages to the very constituency we exist to serve and dispel the perception that some have formed, especially for those that see all listings as being in descending order of importance or preference. Having SDVOSBs and VOSBs at the very top should allay their concerns.

We need to work on dispelling that perception on our end here in OSDBU, too. Beginning with the Fiscal Year 2007 socioeconomic reports, the ordering of socioeconomic categories on the report will be changed to list SDVOSB and VOSB accomplishments, first and second, respectively.

The fix here is easy and the results will go along way to changing a perception and improving VA's image as the chief advocate for veteran entrepreneurs.

## Subcontracting Corner

### Subcontracting Plan Submissions

*By: Lynette Simmons, Procurement Analyst*

FAR has been changed to reflect the dollar threshold for when a subcontracting plan is required. A plan is required:

- ◆ in negotiated acquisitions for each solicitation of offers to perform a contract or contract modification, that individually is expected to exceed \$550,000 (an increase of \$50,000; however, \$1,000,000 for construction remains the same);

*(Subcontracting Plan Submissions, continued on Page 6)*

*(Subcontracting Plan Submissions, continued from Page 5)*

- ◆ in sealed bidding acquisitions, each invitation for bid(s) to perform a contract or contract modification, that individually is expected to exceed the same dollar amount listed above and that has subcontracting possibilities shall require the apparently successful offer or the bidder selected for award to submit a subcontracting plan.

The contracting officer may require the submission of a subcontracting plan with initial offers, or at any time prior to award (FAR 19.705-2(d)).

**Just a reminder....**If it is determined that there are no subcontracting possibilities, the determination must be approved at a level above the contracting officer and placed in the contract file. A copy must be sent to the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU).

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## Hey! OSDBU has a new addition to its Prime Contracting Team—Welcome Cordell Smith

Cordell E. Smith is a small business specialist in the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Smith is part of the prime contracting team, responsible for reviewing VA acquisitions for small business opportunities.



Prior to joining the VA OSDBU staff, Mr. Smith was executive director for the HUBZone Contractors National Council, a trade association of small firms certified into the Small Business Administration's HUBZone program. From 2002 to 2005, he served as an analyst for the U.S. General Accounting Office, Acquisition and Sourcing Management team, where he led a review of the General Services Administration's proposed debarment of WorldCom, Inc.

From 1997 to 2002, Mr. Smith was a member of the professional staff for Senator Christopher S. (Kit) Bond of Missouri, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Mr. Smith was responsible for issues affecting Government contracting with small business, as well as Federal budget issues in general.

Mr. Smith received his MA in political science (1993) at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri, and his BA in history at the University of Missouri-Rolla (1988).

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## Outreach Corner

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### OSDBU Vendor Day Changes

By: Linda Sitney, *Small Business Specialist*

You may remember from our March Issue of the Small Business Advocate, that our current Vendor Day Ses-

sions are held the third Thursday of each month from 9:30 a.m. until approximately 11:30 a.m. except for the months of April and December. In the month of April, the session is held on the third Wednesday because the OSDBU Procurement Conference which is normally held the third Thursday in April. We do not have a Vendor Day Session in the month of December because of the holiday season.

Effective January 2007, our Vendor Day Sessions will be held the third Wednesday of the month. The time and location will remain the same and we will not have a session in the month of December.

Other projected enhancements include expanding our small business audience in collaboration with VA Medical Centers VISN-wide which have video-teleconferencing capabilities. Our current audience consists of mostly local small businesses. With the use of video-teleconferencing, we will be able to reach additional small businesses in other areas of the country. We would like to use the same mechanism (video-teleconference) to increase the level of participation from VA program officials and contracting activities involved. The Cleveland Office of Information Service Center currently supports the session via video-teleconference quarterly. We are hoping to enlist the Austin Automation Center in the near future.

Sixty-two percent of our Vendor Day attendees each month are Information Technology small businesses. As a result, we will institute a Vendor Day Session for Information Technology small businesses. We will keep you abreast of the status of the projected enhancements. If there are any questions or suggestions on our Vendor Day Session, please contact Tamika Gary or Linda Sitney at 202-565-8133 or 202-565-8132, respectively.

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## VOSB & SDVOSB Security Awareness Expo – March 1, 2007

In our efforts to comply with VA's implementation of Executive Order 13360 and the strategy approved by the Deputy Secretary in February 2005, OSDBU is planning a Security Awareness Expo on March 1, 2007 featuring VOSBs and SDVOSBs. The Expo will be held at VA Central Office in room C-7 between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Please register and visit the Expo in support of the exhibiting VOSBs and SDVOSBs.

We are also seeking your input on the types of Expos you would like to see in the future. Please e-mail me your input at [Linda.sitney@va.gov](mailto:Linda.sitney@va.gov).

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## Small Business Program Support

The preliminary Socioeconomic Achievement numbers for FY 06 indicate that VA met or exceeded the Secretary's goals in the VOSB and SDVOSB categories. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you  
*(Small Business Program Support, continued on Page 7)*

*(Small Business Program Support, continued from Page 6)*

that supported VA's Small Business Programs last fiscal year. We are appreciative of the local support we consistently receive from VHA to attend Small Business Conferences, the dedication of the designated small business points of contact in their efforts to assist small businesses in marketing to VA, and the devoted program managers that participate in our Vendor Day Sessions each month. The success of VA's Small Business Programs is dependent on key players like you. Thanks again for your support. As a team, we look forward to doing bigger and better things in FY 07. The final numbers will be published in the next edition of the *AdVocAte*.

### IN MEMORIAM

The Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) is saddened by the December 13, 2006, passing of our dear friend and colleague, Margaret A. Milligan, Acquisition Team Senior Procurement Analyst for VHA Chief Prosthetics and Clinical Logistics Office, VA Central Office.



For over two years Margaret served as the principal liaison between OSDBU and VHA on all small business issues. A thoughtful, kind and gentle lady, Margaret was a demonstrative small business advocate whose actions and extraordinary efforts allowed for OSDBU to provide stellar service to OSDBU clients while ensuring the needs of VHA's acquisition professionals and operations were met. Margaret was recognized earlier this year by OSDBU with a Special Contribution Award for her work. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Margaret's Mother, Marilyn Milligan, her brother John Milligan, and Sister Paula Keil. May they take comfort in Margaret's many professional accomplishments and the thoughts and prayers of her friends and co-workers she leaves to mourn her loss.

### Hanukkah – Begins at Sundown December 25<sup>th</sup>

*From the History Channel.com*

Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days and nights, starting on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar (which is November-December on the Gregorian calendar). In Hebrew, the word "Hanukkah" means "dedication." The holiday commemorates the rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem after the Jews' 165 B.C.E. victory over the Hellenist Syrians.



Antiochus, the Greek King of Syria, outlawed Jewish rituals and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods.

In 168 B.C.E. the Jews' holy Temple was seized and dedicated to the worship of Zeus. Some Jews were afraid of the Greek soldiers and obeyed them, but most were angry and decided to fight back. The fighting began in Modiin, a village not far from Jerusalem. A Greek officer and soldiers assembled the villagers, asking them to bow to an idol and eat the flesh of a pig, activities forbidden to Jews. The officer asked Mattathias, a Jewish High Priest, to take part in the ceremony. He refused, and another villager stepped forward and offered to do it instead. Mattathias became outraged, took out his sword and killed the man, then killed the officer. His five sons and the other villagers then attacked and killed the soldiers. Mattathias' family went into hiding in the nearby mountains, where many other Jews who wanted to fight the Greeks joined them. They attacked the Greek soldiers whenever possible.

About a year after the rebellion started, Mattathias died. Before his death, he put his brave son Judah Maccabee in charge of the growing army. After three years of fighting, the Jews defeated the Greek army, despite having fewer men and weapons. Judah Maccabee and his soldiers went to the holy Temple, and were saddened that many things were missing or broken, including the golden menorah. They cleaned and repaired the Temple, and when they were finished, they decided to have a big dedication ceremony. For the celebration, the Maccabees wanted to light the menorah. They looked everywhere for oil, and found a small flask that contained only enough oil to light the menorah for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days. This gave them enough time to obtain new oil to keep the menorah lit. Today Jews celebrate Hanukkah for eight days by lighting candles in a menorah every night, thus commemorating the eight-day miracle.

On the first night of Hanukkah, one light is lit. On each successive night a light is added until the eighth night, when all the lights are lit. The addition of light recalls the greatness and growth of the miracle. Candles are placed in the menorah from right to left, but lit from left to right. The highest candle, known as the Shamash or "servant", is used to light the other candles. Blessings are recited each night before the lights are kindled.

In ancient times, olive oil was used in Hanukkah menorahs. Over time, colorful candles were substituted. In Israel, the Hanukkah menorah is called the Hanukiyah. Menorahs come in all shapes and sizes. Ancient menorahs were made of clay. They consisted of small, pearl shaped vessels, each with its own wick, which were arranged side-by-side. Today's menorah, which stands on a base from which the branches sprout, resembles the holy Temple's menorah and started to appear towards the end of the Middle Ages.

For more information on the history and traditions of Hanukkah, visit the HistoryChannel.com at: [www.historychannel.com/exhibits/holidays/hanukkah/history.html](http://www.historychannel.com/exhibits/holidays/hanukkah/history.html)

## The 2006 Pageant of Peace History

By: *Wayne Simpson, Deputy Director, OSDBU*

As a native Washingtonian, I may be just ever so slightly biased about the beauty of my hometown. But never is my hometown more beautiful than during the holiday season.

“Ground Zero” for the holidays in Washington, D.C., is the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. President Bush kicked off the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pageant of Peace by lighting the National Christmas Tree Thursday evening, December 7, 2006. Presidential lighting of the National Christmas Tree is an unbroken tradition dating back to 1923 when President Calvin Coolidge lit the first Christmas tree in the President’s Park on behalf of all Americans.

The focal point of the Pageant of Peace is that National Christmas Tree, a 41 foot, 9 inch living Colorado Spruce, decorated with red, green, purple, blue and orange bulbs, about 500 strings with 25,000 lights in all. The General Electric Company has funded the decorations for the National Christmas Tree for the last 44 years. Hargrove Inc., a small family-owned and operated decorating company in the Maryland suburbs has decorated the National Christmas Tree every year since President Dwight Eisenhower tapped the firm to do so back in 1955. Hargrove was formed in 1949 and designed floats for Washington’s Cherry Blossom Parade.

The National Christmas Tree is surrounded by 56 smaller trees—one for each state, five territories and the District of Columbia—and forms what become known as the “Pathway of Peace.” All trees are lit each evening from dusk until 11 p.m.



*December 2006*

The Pageant of Peace display includes a Yule log pit for visitors to warm themselves by and a large scale model train. Each evening from December 9<sup>th</sup> through December 23<sup>rd</sup>, musical entertainment featuring musical performances by volunteer choirs and dancers is held on the Ellipse stage. The Pageant of Peace will continue through January 1, 2007.

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## Christmas Pageant of Peace History

By: *C.L. Arbelbide*

### The Capitol Tree – Then & Now

Following the invention of outdoor electric lights the open-air tree lighting ceremony was introduced in Southern California in the early 1900s. Over the years the community activity spread throughout the United States eventually making its way to the East Coast. In 1912 an outdoor tree lighting ceremony held in Madison Park Garden, New York (later to be

known as Madison Square Gardens), encouraged citizens in Washington, D. C. to write to the Evening Star encouraging a similar event be organized in the Capital city. In the fall of 1913 citizens, socialites and business leaders, representing all areas of the city, united to organize a community tree lighting ceremony held Christmas Eve on the East Plaza at the Capitol.

Financial support was an early problem. President Woodrow Wilson was recruited to write a letter of support in hopes that citizens would contribute to the costs. Although the President would be out of the city that Christmas Eve he did offer a letter noting the 1913 tree was "for the citizens of Washington, D. C." A tree was eventually donated to the 1913 event. In 1914 organizers came from the Washington Board of Trade yet financial problems continued to plague the ceremony. Following the lighting of the second community tree, newspaper accounts reported the 1914 activity had fallen into the red. The event was not scheduled for 1915.

Without an organized city-wide Christmas Eve event, citizens simply instituted the New Year's Eve watch party tradition of gathering at the Treasury Building to sing songs both in 1915 and 1916. As the United States entered World War I, in 1917, the event subsided. In celebration of the end of the war ending on November 11, 1918, the local branch of the national agency in charge of servicemen’s recreational activities gained permission to hold a week long celebration on the East Plaza of the Capitol. A lighted Christmas tree was erected, evening sings were held, and citizens danced into the wee hours on New Years Eve. Overhead the illuminated Capitol dome was decorated with huge American flags.



In 1964 the Capitol tree ceremony returned to the West Lawn of the Capitol.



*The U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree December 2006 located on the Capitol's West Front.*

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## Introducing A Presidential Tradition

### 1923 The Ellipse

In November 1923, a letter arrived at the White House, from the District of Columbia Public Schools, proposing a lighted Christmas tree be erected on the South Lawn of the White House - hopefully creating a Winter event similar to the White House Easter Egg Roll an event of "national character" which occurred each Spring.

*(Introducing A Presidential Tradition, continued on Page 9)*



*(Introducing A Presidential Tradition, continued from Page 8)*

First Lady Grace Coolidge, having arranged for a Christmas sing on the North Lawn of the White House and not wanting two events on White House grounds gave permission to erect a cut Christmas tree on the Ellipse south of the White House. Organizers promoted the tree as the "National Christmas Tree." To add to the 'national' appeal, President Calvin Coolidge was invited to participate. On December 24 at 5 p. m., the President walked from the Oval Office to the Ellipse, and pushed the button to light the tree, a gift to the President from Middlebury College in the President's native state of Vermont.

That evening a marathon of activities ensued. Citizens returned to the tree at 7 p.m. for a choral concert and performance by the "President's Own" Marine Band quartet. At 9 p.m. citizens headed to the North Lawn for Mrs. Coolidge's carol sing. At midnight it was back to the Ellipse where a sing was under way as a reenactment of the Wise men's journey was being acted out at the nearby Washington Monument.

In 1924, the American Forestry Association - who had promoted the planting of live community trees in memory of those who lost their lives in World War I - donated to the Christmas Eve event a living tree. Because of the recreational and multipurpose uses of the Ellipse throughout the year the permanent tree was planted in nearby Sherman Plaza, (southeast of the White House and south of the Treasury Building). On Christmas Eve both President Coolidge and First Lady Grace Coolidge participated in the tree lighting ceremony.

Organizers (including representatives of various electrical-related organizations promoting the use of lighted community trees throughout the United States) renamed the tree "The National Community Christmas Tree." The phrase "Community" remained until the late 1960's when the name of the tree returned to the "National Christmas Tree."



*National Christmas Tree Pageant of Peace. White House's Truman Balcony illuminated in the background and decorated with wreaths and garland. Object atop the White House is the U.S. Flag (12/06).*



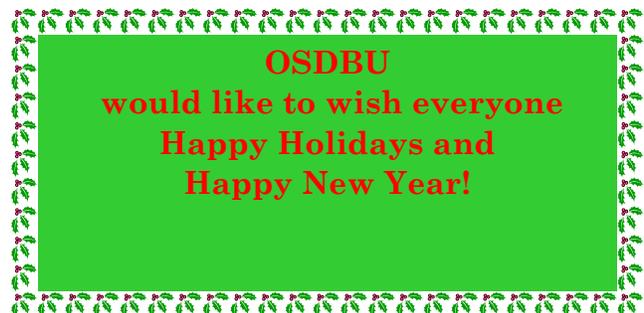
*The U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree December 2006*



*The U.S. National Mall December 2006*



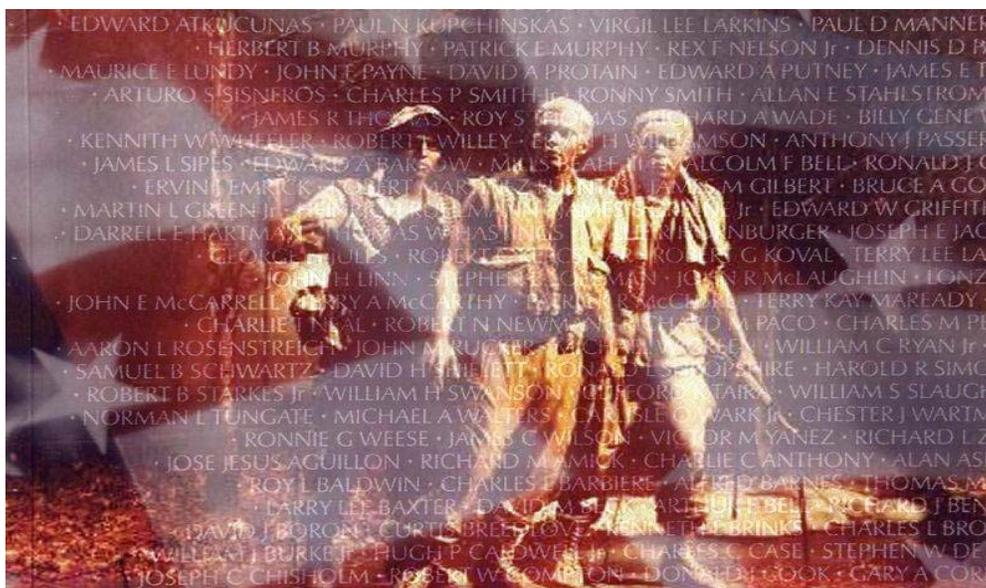
*Note: December 2006 photos provided by Wayne Simpson, Deputy Director, OSDBU*





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Graphic by: Lee S. Girard



## Upcoming Events

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENT/LOCATION</b>
January 18, 2007	Small Business Procurement Fair, Atlantic City, NJ
January 19, 2007	2nd Annual Massachusetts Procurement Conference & Business Exposition, Boston, MA
February 9—10, 2007	The Metropolitan Business League's (MBL) Economic Empowerment Conference & Annual Awards Banquet, Richmond, VA
February 20, 2007	Tennessee Business Matchmaking, Jackson, TN
February 20—22, 2007	Wyoming Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) Procurement Conference, Casper, WY
March 6—7, 2007	NASA/Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) 19th Annual High-Tech Small Business Conference, Los
March 12—15, 2007	Reservation Economic Summit (RES) 2007, Las Vegas, NV
April TBD, 2007	Tennessee Business Matchmaking, Franklin, TN
June 25—29, 2007	3rd Annual National Veterans Conference, Las Vegas, NV